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SUBJECT: KUWAIT RED CRESCENT CHAIRMAN FINDS FAULT WITH
ICRC, ASKS FOR U.S. SUPPORT

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1. (SBU) During an October 25 meeting with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman Mr. Barjas Al-Barjas, the Chairman presented the Ambassador with a set of points he had prepared on specific complaints he has with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and asked for support in pressuring the ICRC for change. His concerns were focused on two areas: the difficulties posed by the prohibition on using military transport for Red Crescent and Red Cross humanitarian relief activities; and the need for the ICRC to offer more direct support for national Red Crescent and Red Cross societies, in order to build capacity in the countries where the needs are greatest.

2. (SBU) When the Ambassador reminded Al-Barjas of the offer of U.S. military transport for KRCS relief supplies destined for the earthquake-struck areas of Pakistan, the Chairman explained that the Red Crescent prohibition on using military transport and/or military escorts for relief supplies actually comes from ICRC rules. He was clearly not pleased with this rule, noting that the KRCS could not supply aid to two of its biggest areas of concern, Iraq and Afghanistan, without the security provided by military escorts. He noted that the ICRC rules forbid the national societies from going into active war zones, but that areas like Iraq and Afghanistan remained dangerous long after the war was officially over.

3. (SBU) The other issue Al-Barjas raised seemed to be his main area of concern and he even had prepared a paper with "Points to be discussed with Ambassador of USA," in Arabic with an English translation. He said that the ICRC needed to provide more support for poor countries in Africa and Asia, and could best do so by providing training and organizational assistance to the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in those countries. He noted that many national Societies cannot even afford to attend the international meetings in Geneva and that KRCS often pays the travel costs for delegations from poor countries. He said that he has tried to raise this issue in Geneva "many times," with no results.

4. (SBU) Al-Barjas noted that the ICRC goes "where there is war," but that so many of the events of the past year - earthquakes, the tsunami, floods, etc. - needed to be dealt with by respective national societies. He said that the ICRC needs to provide training and organizational support to these societies, in order to help them cope directly with the problems in their own countries.

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